



Elements Qualities Polarities – Astrology Lesson 7

The twelve zodiac signs are classified in three different ways: elements, qualities, and polarities. These three classifications essentially define the zodiac signs. Just by knowing the element, quality, and polarity, you would be able to describe the fundamental traits of each zodiac sign without actually learning the sign. This is a very important lesson, indeed.

The author considers this the single most important lesson of the zodiac. The elements, qualities, and polarities are the fundamental, underlying nature of each zodiac sign. Learn these!

[Elements](#) | [Qualities](#) | [Polarities](#)

Zodiac Elements

The element of a zodiac sign reveals the basic temperament of the sign. The element of your Sun, Moon, or Rising sign are of significant importance, but the overall distribution of elements in your chart is what counts the most. Having more than 4 planets in an element will have an impact on your behavior, even if that element does not correspond to your Sun sign. An abundance (5 or more), or a lack (0-2), of an element has much impact on your temperament. See [Balance of Elements](#).

There are four zodiac elements, with three zodiac signs belonging to each element group. The elements are interchangeably called "triplicities;" this is because there are three (triple) signs per element. The four elements are Fire, Earth, Air, and Water.

Fire Zodiac Element

The fire signs are Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius. Fire signs respond to energy very quickly. They favor action. They're ready to go, take a risk, start a business, go on a trip, etc. They are confident, idealistic, intense, and approach life

with zest and enthusiasm. Here is energy to conquer, lead, and travel physically and mentally. Aries must act, Leo must lead grandly, and Sagittarius explores unknown places and ideas.

Positive keywords: extroverted, energetic, enthusiastic, inspirational, visionary, high-spirited, simple and direct, physically active, dramatic, courageous, warm.

Negative keywords: overly active to the point of burnout, restless, impatient, selfish, insensitive, willful, hasty, lacking in perspective, thoughtless, impulsive, reckless, extravagant, wild.

See the love style of the [fire signs](#).

Earth Zodiac Element

The Earth signs are Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn. Earth signs are more cautious in their approach. They are more practical, realistic, and they need solid footing before going forward. Taurus will dig the heels in and really ponder things. Virgo will analyze. Capricorn will climb, but will do it with care, first needing a vision, a plan, an organized structure before starting the ascent. Earth signs are dependable, thorough and solid.

Earth signs seek to engage the physical world and master it through efficient organization. Earth signs seek economic security, respect, and prestige, and they work hard for it.

Positive keywords: practical, efficient, organized, realistic, patient, self-disciplined, hard-working, productive, enduring, persistent, dependable, stable, good common sense.

Negative keywords: slow, stodgy, lacking in vision, unimaginative, petty, excessively conventional, narrow-minded, stubborn, resistant to change, hoarding, ultra conservative.

See the love style of the [earth signs](#).

Air Zodiac Element

The Air signs are Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. Air signs approach energy mentally; they are thinkers. They are social, always ready for a new relationship or friendship. They love learning, but bore easily. Gemini has great intellectual curiosity, but too many personalities. Libra is partnership driven, but not in an emotional way. Aquarius is popular with friends and is unstoppable when it has a cause to champion. Air signs are into ideas and people. They are communicative; they must share information, interact with others, and influence society.

Positive keywords: articulate, objective, mentally clear, detached, capable of forethought, understanding, socially adept and adaptable, cooperative, relational.

Negative keywords: unemotional, lacking in sympathy, impractical, disassociated from the body and the physical world, over-adaptive, abstracted, glib and facile, hyperactive.

See the love style of the [air signs](#).

Water Zodiac Element

Water signs respond to energy almost unconsciously. They are deeply emotional. Cancer is motivated to nurture and be nurtured. Scorpio has intense vision, never swaying, looking straight ahead with laser-like focus. Pisces is the trickiest to describe. Pisces energy is chameleon-like, absorbing its surroundings.

Positive keywords: deeply emotional, sympathetic, empathetic, nurturing, calm and peaceful, sensitive, compassionate, imaginative, intuitive, psychically aware.

Negative keywords: emotionally insecure and unstable, shy, timid, lacking in confidence, oversensitive, easily influenced and manipulated, withdrawn, uncommunicative, vindictive and vengeful, takes everything personally, moody and depressed.

See the love style of the [water signs](#).

Zodiac Qualities

The qualities, also called "modes," or "modalities," indicate how people respond to stimuli, and especially how they act under tension. They indicate how the signs express their element, meaning the **mode of behavior** they use to express the element needs. There are three qualities: **Cardinal**, **Fixed**, and **Mutable**. They are also called "quadruplicities" because there are 4 signs per group. To learn how to calculate the balance of qualities in a birth chart, see [Balance of Qualities](#).

Cardinal Signs

Cardinal Signs are the most assertive, the most interested in initiating change. Their mode of activity is to start new things. They easily begin things and respond well to new ideas. They are self-starters. Crisis motivates them. They achieve control by remaining one step ahead of everyone else. Aries seeks leadership and control in general, Cancer controls emotions, home, and family; Libra tries to control partnerships; Capricorn controls, uses, and exploits the material environment. For Cardinal signs, things are always happening. This is usually because they are doing the starting. The four Cardinal signs are at the first month of each season.

Fixed Signs

Fixed Signs are the most stable and self-contained. Their mode of activity is sort of passive, yet determined, unwavering, and even stubborn. Their strength is their consistency and loyalty. They follow things through to the end, managing and sustaining what has been started by the Cardinal signs. They may go to denial in times of change. They are very resistant to change, needing to take time to prep themselves. They tend to be late: Taurus is just slow; Scorpio uses tardiness as a subtle power struggle; Leo enjoys making an entrance; Aquarius wants things on their own terms. Late, but once there, they stay forever. The four Fixed signs are at the middle month of each season.

Mutable Signs

Mutable Signs are the most unstable and most open to influence by the environment. Their mode of activity is to make the transition from the old to the new, opening the way for the Cardinal Signs to begin a new cycle. They are infinitely flexible and tolerant. They find it naturally easy to let go. Whereas Cardinal signs begin new things, and Fixed signs sustain things, Mutable energy loosens structures and adapts it to new and changing conditions. With this territory comes mental worry. Mutable signs have many things going on in their heads rather than in tangible form. Many react by making lists. Some suffer from negative mental tension, involving fear, paranoia, and panic attacks. In anticipating negative outcomes, they really suffer during the worry process. But their high adaptability always sees them through. Gemini is changeable in its ideas; Virgo is dominated by its environment; Sagittarius has a continually changing view of life's possibilities; Pisces adapts itself superficially to its environment (like a chameleon) and reflects it like a mirror. Sometimes they compromise so much that they sacrifice their own interests. The four Mutable signs are at the final month of each season.

Between elements, qualities, and signs, there is only one combination of each, making each zodiac sign unique. For example, there is only 1 cardinal fire sign, only 1 cardinal earth sign, only 1 cardinal air sign, etc. You can understand the nature of each sign by examining these energetic combinations. See the table below (or open in [Print/Download View](#)).

Table of Zodiac Elements and Qualities

Cardinal

FIRE	Aries
EARTH	Capricorn
AIR	Libra
WATER	Cancer

Fixed

FIRE	Leo
EARTH	Taurus
AIR	Aquarius
WATER	Scorpio

Mutable

FIRE	Sagittarius
EARTH	Virgo
AIR	Gemini
WATER	Pisces

Zodiac Polarities

The two polarities are sometimes referred to as male/female, positive/negative, or yang/yin. Modern astrologers prefer to call the polarities **active/receptive**. This type of duality is the earliest form of classification. Six of the zodiac signs are yang energy, which is also known as “masculine” energy. The six yang signs are Aries, Leo, Sagittarius, Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius. These are the Fire and Air signs. These signs are more active and assertive rather than receptive.

The other six signs are yin energy, which is also known as “feminine” energy. The six yin signs are Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn, Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces. These are the Earth and Water signs. These signs are more receptive and reactive rather than active.

In general, signs of the same polarity can understand each other's personalities, whereas signs from opposing polarities have a difficult time seeing eye to eye. Air feeds Fire and empowers it; Earth needs Water for life. When talking about compatibility, Air and Fire signs (yang) go with each other, while Earth and Water signs (yin) go with each other.

Here are keywords to help describe the two opposing yin/yang energies.

Yang	Yin
direct outgoing extroverted giving active male (traditionally) positive (traditionally)	indirect passive/reactive introverted withdrawn receiving/receptive reactive female (traditionally) negative (traditionally)

Summary

(Open the following table in [Print/Download View](#).)

Table of Zodiac Elements, Qualities, and Polarities

SIGN	Aries
ELEMENT	Fire
QUALITY	Cardinal
POLARITY	Yang (+)

SIGN	Taurus
ELEMENT	Earth
QUALITY	Fixed
POLARITY	Yin (-)

SIGN	Gemini
ELEMENT	Air
QUALITY	Mutable
POLARITY	Yang(+)

SIGN	Cancer
ELEMENT	Water
QUALITY	Cardinal
POLARITY	Yin (-)

SIGN	Leo
ELEMENT	Fire
QUALITY	Fixed
POLARITY	Yang (+)

SIGN	Virgo
ELEMENT	Earth
QUALITY	Mutable
POLARITY	Yin (-)

SIGN	Libra
ELEMENT	Air
QUALITY	Cardinal
POLARITY	Yang (+)

SIGN	Scorpio
ELEMENT	Water
QUALITY	Fixed
POLARITY	Yin (-)

SIGN	Sagittarius
ELEMENT	Fire
QUALITY	Mutable
POLARITY	Yang (+)

SIGN	Capricorn
ELEMENT	Earth
QUALITY	Cardinal
POLARITY	Yin (-)

SIGN	Aquarius
ELEMENT	Air
QUALITY	Fixed
POLARITY	Yang (+)

SIGN	Pisces
ELEMENT	Water
QUALITY	Mutable
POLARITY	Yin (-)

[See a printable Zodiac Wheel, labeled with all the Signs, Elements, Qualities, and Polarities.](#)

Next Lesson: [Zodiac Signs – Astrology Lesson 8](#) »

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